Don't be a Stranger

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Don't be a Stranger

by DrottenDrottzen

Summary

The second he runs his gaze over the new rotation of med students, Robby knows he is utterly and completely fucked. Because he recognizes one of those fresh faces. For the worst possible reason.

The reason being that it was pressed into his bed less than eight hours ago.

Pressed into his bed, because Robby was fucking him.

OR: Robby didn't mean to fuck one of the med-students. But things will be fine. They can be professional. Professionalism definately ensues.

Notes

I may or may not have more sequels coming for this verse. Definately. I can't get enough of these two. Keep an eye out.

If you haven't read Perfect Strangers, I would recommend reading it first but I won't harsh your vibe if you wanna start with this one. The premiss is pretty simple so far.

Enjoy!

See the end of the work for more notes

“As you can see, we have some new faces this morning. Good morning, good morning, come on over.”

The second he runs his gaze over the new rotation of med students, Robby knows he is utterly and completely *fucked*.

Because he recognizes one of those fresh faces.

For the worst possible reason.

The reason being that it was pressed into his bed less than eight hours ago.

Pressed into his bed, because Robby was fucking him.

Him being Dennis, who is currently staring at him in abject horror and reminding Robby to stop fucking staring and get on with introductions.

While Melissa King introduces herself and delights sunnily about how happy she is to be there, Robby focuses on getting his expression in check to in no way emote that he spent last night deflowering one of the hospital’s *med students, fucking Christ*. Considering no one is rushing over to hang him for being a cradle robber, he must be doing an okay job of it.

There is nothing he can do about what is going on in his mind, though. Flashes of the night before play behind his eyelids every time he blinks.

Miles of pale skin on his dark sheets. Pliant limbs and a kissed red mouth with faint beard burn all around it. The same mouth open and spilling absolute insanity inducing noises. Big blue eyes turning half lidded and dazed with pleasure. A surprisingly sturdy body that melted into absolute putty under a few well placed touches.

A phantom surge around his cock as he remembers how Dennis’ insides clenched in desperate, needy pulses each time he bottomed out-

“Uh, Dennis Whitaker. MS…4.” That meek voice brings him out of his ill timed reminiscing and reminds him where he is: Knee deep in Shitcreek River sans a paddle. Dennis- no, *Whitaker* is refusing to look at him for longer than half a second at a time. That’s going to become a problem.

For the first time in his fucking life, Dana calling out an incoming trauma fills Robby with relief because that means he can postpone said problem for at least a few more minutes. It's easy to fall into the usual spiel about how the ED works - it's in his spine, he's done the rundown hundreds of times to freshfaced students.

Never to one he's spent about an hour taking apart in his bed the night before, though.

It's always great to have a new experience at his great old age, Robby thinks grimly as he tells the group, "Let's do this." and leads them into rounds and the chaos of working trauma.

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It's not an easy task to get a moment of privacy in the Pitt. But luck shines on him for once and Robby manages to find one about thirty minutes into the shift. Whitaker has brought his fellow med student, Javadi, over after a fainting spell. Or, according to her:

"I tripped on the gurney, I'm totally fine." Javadi's smile is too wide, eyes straining to contain her embarrassment.

Behind her, Whitaker gives a tiny shake of the head and a beseeching stare. Fucking Christ.

After sending the girl away for a cold drink and a possible self deprecating doom spiral, Robby closes the file he was working on and straightens, "Whitaker."

The kid jumps, shoulders jerking up to his ears and turns to him. Robby almost winces for the mortified expression and the way Dana lifts her glasses to her brow for the reaction. Great. Subtle. He's going to have to think of a way out of *that* mess next. "A word, come on."

"Uh, yeah, yes, sir." Despite the quick agreement, Whitaker sounds like he'd rather swallow the notebook in his hands dry than go anywhere with him for the foreseeable future. Even so, he is on his heels and follows him into an unused family room without making a fuss.

Robby holds the door until Dennis has entered, then closes it behind

them. Locking it seems like overkill and vaguely threatening, so he simply leans against it to deter anyone from just bursting in. Then, he crosses his arms and clears his throat. “So. This is awkward.”

“Hah, yeah, you could say that again.” Whitaker laughs nervously. He’s wringing his hands, picking at his nailbeds as he does . Nervous tic? He’ll have to train him out of that, patients pick up on microexpressions immediately and freak out thinking they have a death sentence coming.

“I’d hate to make you feel uncomfortable. That sort of tension can cloud your judgement and we just cannot afford that sort of thing here.” Robby goes on. Takes care to keep his voice calm and low, professional. As if he’s instructing the kid to stay on top of his work ups, not trying to avoid an HR nightmare.

“Right.” Whitaker nods, head stopping low in the motion so his eyes are directed down at his hands. Robby decides to put him out of his misery and give him an easy out.

“So. If you want to switch rotations, or go on the nightshift-” Whitaker’s head jerks up and he looks honestly stunned.

“What? Why? I- I haven’t messed up that badly yet, have I?”

Robby stares, briefly speechless. Whitaker’s cheeks go pink.

“Oh, you mean - because of us and the. Sex - thing - right. Uh. No, I… I’m fine. I don’t want to switch. I’m good.”

“Right. If that changes-”

“I’ll let you know.” Whitaker says - the way his cheeks flush tells Robby he very much realises, just as he does, how it echoes their conversation from just last night the moment before he pushed him down on his bed. “I’m not uncomfortable. I mean, it’s *weird*, but…I’ll be fine. Better now that we’ve talked about it, actually.”

“Great.” Robby hesitates, just a moment. His hands clench into his biceps. Bare - he sort of wishes he was wearing gloves, the containment of latex squeezing a feeling of control into him. “...I suppose it goes without saying that we don’t tell anyone around here about it?” For a second he imagines this getting back to Gloria. It would almost be worth the firing and burning of his medical license just to see her expression.

“I, uh, wasn’t planning on it. I don’t really talk to my coworkers about my sex life. Not that I really had much of one to talk about before last night.” Whitaker clears his throat. When Robby stares at him blankly for a few moments his eyes widen with mortification. “I mean, I wouldn’t even if it wasn’t an inappropriate thing to talk about at work! What I mean is, I realise the seriousness, that it could be- that you wouldn’t want rumours to be spread. Since you’re my boss and - and people could think- uh. You know. Things. And I don’t want to get you into trouble or anything, so-”

“I got it, kid.” Robby interrupts him and almost snorts for how the kid slumps with relief and goes silent with a puff of breath. “We’ll just pretend last night never happened. You won’t have much time to worry about it anyways. There’ll be plenty of distractions, I can promise you that. Never a dull moment here.”

There is a pause. A long one. Then,

“Right. Yeah.” His voice comes out strained and there is…something in Dennis’ eyes. Discomfort. And it doesn’t take a genius to figure out why as Robby starkly remembers - last night was Dennis’ first time. In more ways than one. His first outing into the gay nightlife. First time following some stranger home. First time in another man’s bed, getting fucked. A monumental experience in a short life lived. And to have that be so easily dismissed as if it didn’t matter at all…

Robby isn’t heartless, as much as he wishes sometimes. So, against his better judgement, he goes on. Back still against the door, he reaches out, grabs a hold of Whitaker’s shoulder and squeezes. He waits until Whitaker hesitantly lifts his head. Then, he murmurs in a much gentler tone, “Even if it was a really fucking good night.”

Whitaker’s eyes light up and fuck, that hopeful look is lethal. Robby feels his blood surge to his crotch. “Yeah?”

“Yeah.” Robby’s lips twitch into a small smile. With one more squeeze and what ought to be a friendly pat he pulls his hand back and sticks it into his pocket. Idly fiddles with a stowed away latex glove. “Let’s get back out there. Grab a case from the board and get cracking.”

“Yessir.” Whitaker makes a very awkward salute (fucking adorable) and then starts for the door - awkwardly hovering a moment until Robby steps aside and holds it open for him.

“Good talk.” Robby says and sends him off with a final full palm tap

on the back.

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That should have been it. An awkward situation settled and things returned to normal. Robby is fifty-two years old and he has dealt with workplace drama before. Hells, workplace *romance* drama too. Doctor Collins' stiff demeanor and cutting words are a very clear reminder of that, a lesson learned each and every day. But it has always gone back to normal, or at least a new semblance of it.

And for the most part, that *is* it. The kid is easy enough to work with, he picks up quick. When he messes up, and he *does*, he doesn't complain and pushes through. Everything should proceed as it always has around the Pitt.

But.

Robby can't stop fucking *touching him.*

At first it's to give comfort. Whitaker loses his first patient. Tough, heartwrenching - ít always is. His eyes are so big and harrowed, the bags under them prominent. Sweat drips from his face after a long time of chest compressions and stress. Robby gives what he hopes is a good enough pep-talk to keep him from giving up on medicine forever and then just…grabs his shoulder. Squeezes, pats firmly. Whitaker's shell shocked eyes fall down to his hand and briefly his expression shifts from grief to confusion.

They part awkwardly as Robby suddenly feels oddly discombobulated. And that is just the start.

All of their first shift together. Every time Whitaker is within arm's reach with those wide, earnest eyes and his ever-changing scrubs stretching over his shoulders and cinching in at the waist - he can't help but to *touch.* A hand on the back of his neck, high enough to run his thumb against bare skin, a grab of both hands on his shoulders accompanied by a hard squeeze, a steering touch to the back of a shoulderblade to get him going in the right direction. A continuation of the easy skinship from the night before, the natural attraction he hasn't felt in a fucking *while.* And on and on it goes.

It's *noticeable* and he doesn't realise just how noticeable until Dana comes and leans over the nurses' station while he is reading a chart and murmurs, "So what is up with Whitaker?"

A lifetime of acting neutral in front of panicked patients keeps Robby from reacting. He simply lifts his head and looks inquisitively at her. "What do you mean?"

"Is he doing alright? You keep," She reaches out and brushes a hand against his shoulder and pats it. "Like soothing a spooked horse, you know? Is he still freaking out about losing Mr. Milton?"

Robby sucks his teeth, glances across the room. His eyes find Whitaker at once. He's leaning on his elbows and staring blankly up at the admission screen. He's got a pencil in hand and is absently tapping it against a slightly pouted lower lip. There's another flash of a memory - of that lip caught between his teeth and Dennis whimpering senselessly into his mouth. Shit. He shakes his head, hard.

"No, no. I talked to him about it, he seems fine. Just a little gun-shy about new cases, I think. Keep an eye on him, though."

"Right." Dana is quiet for too long and Robby turns his head to her again. Her brows are gone behind her wispy blonde hair.

"*What*?"

"Nothin'." Dana says in a tone of voice like it is absolutely *something* but she shan't be sharing with the class.

"Fine, be that way." Robby rolls his eyes with more annoyance than he actually feels and wanders away from her to check on Nick Bradley's parents.

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All in all, it's a shit show of a day. Rough case after rough case on a day that would have been hard even if everything ran smoothly. Capped off with a damn MCI where he loses far more than patients: Trust, faith and his damn mind. It's no wonder he ends up where he does - breaking apart on the floor of the pediatrics unit turned morgue. Crying the bitter tears that just have never dried up since that

fateful day at Doctor Adamson's deathbed. Whimpering out the words to a prayer to a God he doesn't think he believes in anymore, yearning for the simpler days it represented, trying to hide from the world.

Whitaker finds him. It's ridiculous. Weeping like a child, cowering from his kindness as he tries to get him back to his senses. Whispering words like 'I can't' and trying to push him away. Dennis sits with him. He listens. Then he stands and offers a hand. Speaks in a trembling yet certain voice,

"You have to. Because if you don't, we're *fucked*."

It's there, on his ass on the floor, looking up over his shoulder at Dennis' hand and up to those beseeching sad eyes that Robby is struck by a wry, tired thought:

"It's cute how you think you can help me."

But somehow, the kid *does* help him. Whitaker knows exactly what to say, what to *do* to drag him out of the spiral and back onto his feet. And despite it feeling impossible, mere minutes later Robby is back out there. Trying to make sense of the carnage, struggling not to hear the wheeze of ECMO in the groans and hurried feet rushing around.

Snapping on a new pair of gloves, he manages to find equilibrium for just a moment. Catches his stride as he catches sight of Whitaker, already back to work and applying pressure to a bleeding wound.

"Good job, Whitaker, Donahue." The words come out of him and he hopes to fuck they come out steady to their ears. They sure as hell sound meek to his own.

They survive the Pittfest shooting by a hair. A glowing achievement among all the blood and carnage. Pride over his team and shame over his own failure to keep it together mingle in Robby's belly. He pushes on. The end of his shift is a mirage on the horizon and he struggles towards it.

Later, on the verge of shouting in the face of ignorant anti-medicine parents, he catches Whitaker as he slips past him on the way to a different case. Grabs him by the shoulders and steers him aside to very haltingly thank him. And, for the fucking umpteenth time that day, the young man surprises him. Throws his own words back at him with added weight, wisdom beyond his years. Advice taken to heart. It startles the first real smile of the last two hours onto his lips.

The good turn of mood only lasts until he is outside for some air and fucking Langdon corners him outside. Begging in a way that eats away at his newfound resolve. But he does alright until he tries to walk away, when Langdon says bitterly at his retreating back,

“Someone saw you in PEDS.”

Panic. Hurt. They mix and burst in his chest, his heart pounding like he was just stuck with a syringe full of epinephrine. Did Whitaker tell people? How many people? Is everyone aware now, whispering about - no, don’t jump to conclusions. Whitaker swore he hadn’t. He’s too good a man to expose a man’s weakness like that. Robby doesn’t know why it’s so important for that to be true, but it is.

Hesitating for half a step, he turns to call back, voice pressed through a slowly closing trachea, “Who, Whitaker?”

Langdon says no and it’s such a fucking relief he hardly hears the rest of his tirade. Only enough to snarl out an incredibly heartfelt, cathartic “FUCK YOU” in parting.

Like most shitty days, this one thankfully ends, too. It ends better than it should, sitting slumped on a park bench, breathing crisp night air and sharing a much needed laugh with his comrades in arms. Abbot’s a steady presence at his side, as he always has been. Knee knocking against his once, twice to make sure he doesn’t disassociate.

Robby finally makes it home and, after a scorching hot shower, he falls face first into bed.

It is then he realises he hasn’t changed the sheets since the night before. The smell of sex is heedy, not unpleasant. Stronger than that is the scent of Dennis Whitaker. Something male, clean and vaguely herbaceous. It makes him think of green fields. Mountains. Fresh air and a freedom he’s never truly felt.

Despite how impossible it should be, Robby falls asleep in a matter of minutes And, for the first time in weeks, without a hint of a sleeping pill, he sleeps until his alarm goes off the next morning.

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The next shift is thankfully less eventful. It's not quiet by any means, but - normal. Manageable. His head feels clearer. He'd even go so far as to say he feels *good* through the day. Maybe it's being over the hump of Adamson's death day. Maybe it is surviving a disaster. Working through trauma and coming out alright on the other side of it. Or maybe it's just the unmedicated, full night of sleep. Either way, Robby isn't about to look a gift horse in the mouth. He'll take a good day and be grateful.

It even starts out *wholesome*. While he checks over the patients spilling over from the nightshift, he overhears Santos and Whitaker having a hearty conversation to his left.

"Did you put crack in these, Huckleberry? Because if you did, I won't tell anyone. I just gotta know for the mandatory drug test."

"It's just sugar, cinnamon and eggs. No artificial stimulants. You of all people should know I couldn't afford drugs." Whitaker huffs. He sounds pleased, though.

"Appearances can be deceiving. Maybe the broke farm boy thing is just an act and in reality you're a full time potrepreneur."

"Okay, that's enough for you, you're actually starting to *sound* high." Whitaker laughs.

Robby chances a glance over the rim of his glasses.

The pair are huddled over a tupperware container, Santos jostling Whitaker with a well placed elbow to get to it. They've still got their jackets on and bags on their shoulders, about to go change and clock in. Whitaker's got his back turned to him and seems quite focused on keeping the box out of Santos' grasping hands.

As quietly as he can, Robby wanders over. He crosses his arms and clears his throat. "I thought we talked about food outside the breakroom, Whitaker?"

"Sh-" Whitaker jumps and almost throws the tupperware - thankfully, Santos grabs it before he can make a mess. Robby barely manages to hold back a grin as he whirls around to stare up at him. "Doctor Robby! Sorry, sir, I was just-"

"Whitaker made us french toast this morning and we brought the leftovers in." Santos cuts in. She looks a bit sheepish. "Just couldn't resist having a last bite, you know?"

Robby's eyebrows shoot up at the 'us'. "You're living together?"

"Uh, yeah, um." Dennis is cleaning up stray bits of sugar and cinnamon, ears a little red. "I had an apartment…thing fall through and Doctor Santos was kind enough to offer me her spare room."

"In return for cleaning and cooking. Back breaking labour, too." Santos shrugs. "Haven't found much of that yet, but here's hoping."

"Gee, thanks." Dennis huffs.

"You're *so* welcome." Santos gives a theatrical little half bow.

"Great way to save on rent." Robby cuts in before they can keep arguing, taking off his glasses and folding them into his hoodie. "I roomed with Doctor Abbot for a while, back in the day."

"No kidding?" Dennis looks curious at the prospect.

"Mhm. Anyway, the food. Get it out of here. We don't need any crumbs attracting more rats for our resident bloodhound to deal with." Unable to fucking help himself, Robby reaches out and grabs Whitaker's shoulder and jostles him gently.

"We'll put it away." Whitaker promises sheepishly. His cheeks are still flushed. He's got sugar at the corner of his lips. There is a hungry curl in the pit of Robby's stomach and it has absolutely nothing to do with the french toast.

Thankfully, before his mind can devolve any further, Santos shoves the tupperware under Robby's nose and exclaims, "Try one, Doctor Robby. I swear you'll see why we forgot ourselves."

"I *just* said-"

"Yeah, I know, just - one?" Santos needles. "It'll change your life, promise."

"Fine, fine." Robby sighs and grabs a piece of the sticky treat. He takes a quick bite, not expecting much and-

"Motherfucker." He groans and quickly goes for another bite. It's sweet, buttery and - there *has* to be something else in it than the previously listed ingredients, because there is no *way* simple french toast should do that much in the mouth and having him chasing the taste by sucking his thumb clean.

“Told ya.” Santos grins at Dennis. “Crack.” Beside her, Whitaker is looking a little unsteady, hands shoved deep in his pockets. He’s staring.

“I’ll let it slide this time if you leave the rest with me.” Robby gestures for the tupperware. “Quick, before Dana sees.”

“Good to know bribes work around here for the future.” Santos cackles and hands him the box.

“Clock in, you two. Rounds start in five.” Robby settles the box on his desk and slips his glasses back on, waving them off. “This never happened. Go. Scoot.”

“Yessir!” Santos salutes and hurries ahead. Whitaker lingers for a second. Their eyes meet. And Robby can’t help himself - he winks. Just once.

A self-satisfied, shy little smile makes its’ home on Whitaker’s lips as he ducks his head and follows Santos out the push doors. It haunts him for the rest of the damn shift.

-

“What happened to no food outside the break room?” McKay asks in passing while Robby pops the last of the french toast into his mouth later in the afternoon.

“Every rule has exceptions.” Robby says out of the corner of his mouth as he chews.

-

Two days later, as Robby is finishing up his caseload to go home for the night, Abbot comes up and leans against the nurses’ station. Nudges him with his shoulder, smirking up at him in a way that immediately tells Robby that he is going to hate the conversation coming up.

“I heard you got lucky last week, brother.”

Robby groans. He was right. “Who told you that?”

“Johnson. He said you left the Pitt Stop with some twenty year old twink?”

Shit.

“You should know better than to trust a cop, Jack.” Robby says as breezily as he can, clicking up a new file to read over. “And what even fucking is a twink?”

“Skinny and young guy. Don’t deflect.”

Knowing it’s a lost cause to feign ignorance any further, Robby sighs heavily, then mutters under his breath, “Fuck, fine, yes. I took a guy home who happened to be in his twenties. *Late* twenties.”

“Huh.”

“What?”

“Bit out of character for you, is all. You usually like ‘em a little older than legal drinking age. Is this the dreaded mid-life crisis coming?” Abbot asks grimly, then laughs heartily as Robby gives him his most venomous glare.

“Any other snide comments about my sex life or can I finish up here?”

“Easy, DiCaprio. No need to get defensive unless you did something wrong.” There must be something showing on his face, because Abbot’s eyes narrow just so at him. “...there *is* something.”

“Nope.” Robby tucks his glasses on as if they could protect his secrets, like he was some sort of Clark Kent. Fakes an interest in the already long resolved troponin test of his 4PM heart attack victim. “Just an ill-advised hook up with a stranger. Nothing new, nothing to write home about.”

“Robby.”

“Let it go, Jack.” Robby says in the tone of voice he uses when he is about to lose his fucking shit if his boundaries are pushed any further. The half sing-song that makes his blood feel like it’s boiling in his

throat with the effort to remain nice.

As expected, Abbot doesn't care one iota about his deflecting tactics and presses on.

"...right. I didn't want to say anything because I thought I was being paranoid these last few days, but. Johnson gave me a description. Cute kid, big puppy eyes. Brown hair and looking at you like you were the second coming of Christ? Ring a bell?"

"Plenty of cute brunets in Pittsburgh." There's sweat gathering at the back of his neck. But he stays outwardly calm. There is no way Abbot could know. No matter what a nosy cop might have seen or-

"He also said the kid was called Dennis? He remembered 'cause it got him thinking of Dennis the Menace."

- heard.

Fucking shit.

Robby glances at Abbot. Abbot meets his gaze. Then gives a tiny nod behind him, brows raised.

Reluctantly, Robby turns his head around. Of course Whitaker is fucking right *there*, on the other side of the central station talking to Shen, dutifully passing on his cases. He looks a little tired, but good - fulfilled and worked over. Sort of like he looked after, on Robby's bed, loose limbed and trembling the tiniest bit and *smiling*.

Deciding to bite the bullet, Robby gives a tiny incline of his head in acknowledgement, hunches over his work station and awaits the shitstorm coming his way.

"Really, Robby?" Abbot's voice is low, incredulous. It *itches* and Robby can't help but to bristle.

"It - look, I didn't know he was a med student, man." Robby hisses as he turns to face the computer again, tapping harder at his keyboard. He misspells 'seizure' so badly he has to erase the entire stupid word and start over to make it look right. "Even if I did, there are a hundred fucking hospitals in the city. I'd have no way of knowing - it doesn't matter. We've talked about it. It's all sorted."

"Sorted." Abbot deadpans, voice a drawl. "Right."

“The fuck’s that supposed to mean?” And now he does sound defensive, even he can hear it. He can also see Perlah and Princess straining their ears to get in on their conversation, so he lowers his voice another few decibels, “We’re fine. I offered the kid to switch rotations or go on the night shift if he was uncomfortable. He declined. We’re good. It’s *sorted*.”

“Uh-huh.”

“*Jack*.”

“Got it. All good.” Abbot gives his shoulder a hard pat. “Whatever you say, brother. Have a good night.”

“Sure as shit won’t now!” Robby calls after him, a little more honestly than he’d like. Huffing, he looks back down to his pad - pausing when he briefly makes eye contact with Whitaker.

The kid looks mildly curious, probably because of the yelling. And then he waves. A tiny, awkward little thing, before he turns and walks out together with Doctor Santos. As they exit the ED, she throws an arm around Whitaker’s shoulders and ruffles his hair. Hair Robby knows is a little coarser than it looks and just how gratifying it feels to pull on to keep Dennis from muffling his voice in the pillows while he’s getting it hard from behind-

Robby takes a long, slow breath through his mouth. Lets it out even slower through his nose. Then, he goes back to his notes and tries to pretend he isn’t a fucking depraved old man.

-

“The hell was that about?” Princess hisses behind her clipboard.

“Trouble, that’s what.” Perlah mutters out of the corner of her mouth. *“This place is a damn soap opera without the cameras.”*

-

Langdon being gone is rough. Being a senior resident short is - hard. Even harder when Gloria is making the damn situation worse by being *difficult* and characteristically *stingy*.

“I’m *sorry,* Doctor Robby - but with Doctor Langdon out on paid leave, we can’t really swing for an extra full time senior resident! Surely you realise-”

“Realise we are being shafted again? Sure do!” Robby cuts in brightly, shaking his head with a disbelief he lost long ago but knows how to emote whenever Gloria starts with her excuses. “Instead of getting help, the people I’ve got left and myself will be working ourselves ragged down to the bone. We will go down a spiral of lack of sleep and time off until we go full Mad Hatter crazy and burn the place down! It’ll be great! Future historians will look at us and draw all sorts of useful conclusions. Such as ‘boy, if only they had an extra senior resident, they would probably have been fine’.”

“If you are done with your little Shakespearean monologue,” Gloria drawls, clearly bemused, “I was going to say I am talking to UPMC Mercy to see if we could run some sort of exchange program until Doctor Langdon is cleared back to work. I’ve also got feelers out for some traveler nurses to -”

“Talk’s cheap. Get back to me when you have taken action.” Robby interrupts again. His smile feels as stiff as rigor mortis. Gloria throws her hands up, scoffs and stalks off to ascend back to the fancy pants office she’s got on the top floor.

“Guess we’re all working Thanksgiving this year too, then.” Dana taps her pen against her desk dully. “Benji will be thrilled.” Fuck is Robby glad she stayed.

“I’ll order us Turkey subs from Vivaldi.” Robby groans, stretching out his back. “Fucking Langdon.”

“At least it can only get better, right?” Dana says with a guffaw of laughter.

-

It gets worse.

It's not quite as bad as the Pittfest shooting. But it gets pretty damn close. Case after case that Robby knows will haunt and follow them all for years and years.

A ten year old kid gets rushed in by ambulance. His name is Harry. He forgot to tie his shoes, tripped and fell down a flight of stairs at school. Landing on his head. He's conscious and whimpering and weighs practically nothing when they transfer him to the trauma bed. After a few careful questions and pokes and prods, Robby is about 90% certain the kid has broken his neck. He and Doctor McKay share knowing, pained glances while Jesse and Princess prep the X-ray.

A quick shot of his neck later confirms it. Severe fractures to the lower two cervical vertebrae. It's a miracle the kid is still breathing on his own.

The parents are heartbroken. Robby runs out of words and can only stay as a steady presence by the wailing mother and stoic father's side as the boy whose life just changed forever is wheeled off into an elevator for emergency surgery and into a bleak future.

An elderly woman is brought in with a massive stroke - it is clear she won't make it by how advanced her symptoms are. She was home alone while her husband was out buying them dinner. When he returned, she had been on the floor, face uneven and lips turning blue. Her husband had called 911 immediately, the ambulance came quickly but - there wasn't much they could do. The woman dies about ten minutes after being brought in to the ED.

Whitaker, who wound up on CPR for those full ten minutes, stands tight lipped and red eyed in the doorway of the viewing room, aching hands shaking at his sides as he watches the husband clutching feebly at his wife's cold fingers. The old man's voice trembles miserably as he's whispering to her corpse. "How can I do this without you, my love? I've never had to do anything without you. I don't - I can't even remember where I put the scissors this morning. How do I go through life without - without you reminding me where-?" and then he dissolves into sobs.

"Take a minute." Robby tells Whitaker quietly. Brushes his fingers against his down turned neck.

"I'm fine." Whitaker whispers stubbornly. Wipes harshly at his dry eyes, then walks out - to chart and carry on with a new case. As they fucking must.

To top the shit sandwich off, there is a pile up towards the tail end of their shift. Dispatch tells them there are eight cars and a ten wheeler truck involved. Everyone readies themselves for an influx of patients, for overtime. A couple extra nurses come down to help from upstairs.

They get three patients total. The rest passed at the scene.

Only one out of the three make it upstairs.

Those are the numbers some days. That's life. As much as they all know, it hurts all the same.

Robby gathers his people afterwards. Looks them over one by one as he tries to think of something to fucking say.

Doctor King asked to leave early to pick up her sister - he let her, knowing it was what she needed more than seeing this through to the end. Mohan is solemnly peeling off her unused latex gloves. McKay is clutching her phone to her chest. Javadi stands to the very back and Mateo's got a hand on her lightly trembling shoulder. Perlah and Princess have their heads on Dana's shoulders, both of her thin arms strong around their waists. Donnie has his hands clasped behind his head, eyes directed at the ceiling - tear tracks down his cheeks. Jesse's got a steely hand on his shoulder, eyes similarly wet and glowering at the floor. Heather stands a heavy presence right at his shoulder, gaze a hundred miles away. Santos and Whitaker are off to the side. She's got an elbow resting against his shoulderblade, while Dennis is hunched over the side of the nurse's station, head bent low.

Christ. They all look like they've aged ten years in the last ten minutes.

Robby takes a deep breath, then finally speaks.

"This has been a shit day. You don't need me to tell you that." There is a brief ripple through them - hints of smiles, bitter and hurting. "There isn't much I can say to make that better. All I can say is this: Tonight, go home and find something good. Watch a movie, hold someone close, take a long bath, eat some junk - whatever it is. Find one thing. A bright spot. End the day with a positive and let it be the last thing you think about before you go to sleep." Robby takes another breath, rubs his jaw. Looks them all over one final time, makes sure to hold eye contact with each and every one for at least two seconds. "It's tough. But that's how we stay right side up and find the surface. One bright moment at a time."

There is a long bout of silence. The words hang between them all. He watches them share glances and nods and there it is. Bonds growing stronger, as they always do through the trauma they endure.

Robby claps his hands together. Once, hard. A clean, sharp burst of sound. A punctuation mark.

“Good job today, everyone. Good night.”

-

Robby follows his own advice. He goes home and takes the longest, hottest shower of his life - his skin is red and raw all over by the time he steps out of the cabin, heralded by a huge cloud of steam. He orders a steak from a nearby restaurant and gets comfortable in sweatpants and an oversized t-shirt. The meal arrives promptly and he eats it in front of the TV playing Frasier reruns with a tumbler of his best bourbon.

It doesn’t help. The dark clouds are swirling slowly in his chest. Even through the canned audience laughter he can still hear the rapid beeping of a heartmonitor displaying v-fib, a mother’s screams of anguish and the screech of shoes sliding through blood on linoleum floors. He switches to a nature documentary - something with sharks and David Attenborough. It leaves him restless, tapping his foot where he’s got it resting over his knee.

This is usually the point where he’d go out. Find a bar, masquerade amongst the living, find a stranger to warm his bed and forget about the world with. But the idea of getting dressed and going outside, of putting himself in a crowd, drowning in the noise of too many voices and unfamiliar music and having to put in an effort to be *charming*…

Robby groans and rubs his face slowly with both hands, slumped back on the couch. He plays with the idea of jerking off, but his mind is running a thousand miles an hour. In the end, he grabs his bourbon and downs the last dregs of it, resigns himself to an Ambien and going straight to bed.

As he puts his dishes in the sink, the doorbell rings.

Robby stands absolutely still. Waits.

Another ring and he grunts, kicks the counter before heading over to check. At this time of night, he expects either a drunk or someone with a broken down car asking for help. Maybe even an errant Jehova's Witness with bad time perception.

What he does not expect is Dennis *fucking* Whitaker standing on his doorstep in ratty jeans and converse, hugging himself with a windbreaker barely worth the name. His nose is red and his eyes are too wide and immediately Robby is overcome with a surge of furious frustration.

"*Jesus Christ.*" Robby growls, tilting his head back - his neck clicks, spine aligning with a rush of heat. The muscles of his neck feel taut, jugular veins throbbing up into his clenched jaw. "You can NOT be here, Whitaker-"

"Dennis."

Robby snaps his head back down. He's immediately met by those fucking eyes again - earnestly staring into his, refusing to budge. Bright, full of intent.

"What?"

Whitaker speaks like a man possessed, quick and fevered, hands gesturing wildly. "I- right now, can I just be Dennis? The guy you picked up in a bar a week ago? Who knows you had a really shitty shift and kind of definitely also had a really shitty day at work and really needs - needs this? And you can just be Michael for a second and not - not Doctor Robby? And we do what you do when you've had a bad shift? Because," His voice is rapidly losing steam and yet, he manages to end his train of thought, "...because I don't know about you, but I need something good and right now I just can't think of anything else."

There's a bubble growing in Robby's chest. Somewhere behind the ribs. And he cannot let it pop. Because if he does, he will do something stupid. Something he can't undo. He takes a deep breath, clenches his fingers into the doorframe so hard they turn white. "Whitaker-"

"Please? I just…" Whitaker's voice breaks and his breath comes out in a hitchy rush, "I just need you to show me which way is up, because if there's a surface I just *can't find it.*"

It's tempting. Beyond tempting. Robby's pulse is picking up, all his

buttons being pushed at once. He's weak to being asked and Whitaker isn't just asking. He's *begging* for it.

It's also a terrible fucking idea. Whitaker is vulnerable and exposed after a horrific day. It's a coping mechanism Robby should shut down right now. It's his own, mirrored, so he knows *intimately* it doesn't work in the long run. Robby should be a good mentor, turn him down, offer some sort of advice. Send him off into the night, shut the door and go to bed.

It's what he *should* do.

Robby has never been particularly good at doing what he should.

The bubble pops.

Robby grabs Whitaker by the back of the neck and yanks him in through the door so they are standing nose to nose.

"I don't think I can be gentle this time." Michael says, fingers sliding up and tightening into his hair. Tugs, hard, just once.

"Great." Dennis whispers, voice low, hoarse. Tilts his head back, yields, blue eyes not leaving his for a second. This close, Michael can spot a faint ring of hazel around the pupil. "Perfect."

-

Michael throws Dennis up against the door the second it shuts. Holds him firmly by the jaw and back of the head as he kisses him - deep and with a demanding tongue pushing in without preamble. He kisses him until the taste of stale adrenaline and sour grief is gone and replaced with only dark black hunger.

Dennis' hands roam over his chest, his shoulders, fists into the fabric of his t-shirt. Impatient, Michael grabs his wrist and drags it lower until he has his hand pressed firmly to his crotch. Dennis gasps into the kiss. Touches reverently, fingers shaking around the shape of him. Not at all what Michael needs.

He pulls away from the kiss with a groan and squeezes Dennis' jaw until he whimpers and focuses up on him. "You ever sucked cock

before?" Michael demands. Hardly recognizes his own voice. It's been a long fucking time since he was this far gone.

"Yeah." Dennis whispers, voice breathless, an octave too high. Right then, Michael can't bring himself to care if he's lying.

"On your knees. Go." Michael pushes heavily down on his shoulder - he needn't have bothered, Dennis drops so fast he must have bruised his knees. A tug of cold hands later, Michael's sweatpants are around his knees and he feels quick, hot breaths against his cock. He grits his teeth, winds his fingers into the short curls at the back of his head and pulls him closer. Shudders and lets his head fall back as a surge of pleasure rushes up his spine for the first touch of Dennis' lips and tongue against the shaft. Slick, warm, almost unbearably so in the lingering chill from the only recently shut door. After a few tentative licks and breathless, maddening little moans Michael bows his head and tugs on the hair captured in his fingers until Dennis looks up at him. His eyes are cloudy, lost in the moment.

"Get your mouth on me properly." It's not quite a snarl, but it's meaner than he meant it.

Dennis doesn't seem to mind. His eyelids flutter and he nods, then goes right back to it. Opens his mouth, leans in and takes the head of his cock past his lips - slow, languid. Taking his time. Like he's saying a prayer in the back of his mind, worshipping. It suits him, being on his knees. Michael wonders if he was ever as diligent or as earnest in church, using his mouth to converse with God. Tries not to utterly lose his mind for the thought.

"That's it. Just like that." He murmurs, hardly aware of the words he says as his cock hardens rapidly in Dennis' wet, eager mouth. There's a slight rasp against the underside of the shaft, though Dennis is quick to correct himself and get his lip curled over his teeth. Michael hardly minds the brief sting. Especially not when Dennis starts to suck, lips flexing around his cock and head moving up and down. Soon enough, there's soft, slick sounds of friction echoing in the foyer. They shiver in tandem as saliva escapes down Dennis' lightly quivering jaw.

Dennis is using a little too much tongue and not enough pressure. It's a struggle not to thrust, not to take and just fuck away the taut cord of frustration running up his spine Instead, Michael takes control with his words - voice frayed at the edges, he demands, "Faster. Deeper, if you can."

Eager to please to a fucking fault, Dennis obliges. Bobs his head just a tiny bit faster, tightens his lips as he swallows excess saliva. His fingers, still cold from the outside (did the kid walk here without *gloves*?) take purchase on his hip, the small of his back and hold on as he feeds himself more cock, takes him another couple inches deeper. Michael feels when he reaches his limit - the base of his tongue flexing and pressing up hard against the throbbing vein on the underside of the shaft. Dennis lets out a choked little grunt and quickly pulls back, keeps only the head in his mouth. Breathes heavily through his nose, blinking away tears from the gag reflex he barely suppressed. It's probably fucked up that Michael finds it sexy. That he's new to this. That he's learning.

Michael brushes the tears away with a careful swipe of his thumb. The tiny touch makes Dennis blink and lift his gaze. Those pretty, bright eyes are rapidly becoming glazed over with lust and something sweet and mindless. But there's hesitation, too. Seeking reassurance.

That, he can do. Gladly.

"You look good like this, baby." Michael says, voice low and throaty. Presses his hip forward just a tiny bit, sinking himself half an inch deeper with a grunt. "On your knees, cock in your mouth. Like you were *made* for it."

Dennis lets out a noise like he's been *shot*. Eyes widening a fraction, then falling to beautiful half liddedness. With newfound vigour, he goes back to his task - sucks him down deep and sets a pace. Once his hand has warmed properly against his hip, Michael guides it to the base of his cock and wraps it around what he can't fit in his mouth- helps Dennis stroke him at the same time as he sucks. He's quickly finding a rhythm that works. Just like in the ED, he's a quick study.

"That's it. Keep going." Michael hisses. He can't tear his eyes away. Stares with biblical proportions of greed at how Dennis' face turns shade after shade redder, at how his eyelids grow heavy before slipping shut. At how his thighs clench together, how there's a visible bulge at the crotch of his jeans proving how much he is enjoying this. He can only imagine how badly it must be aching by now. Idly, he wonders if he could make the kid come in his pants - *knows with certainty he could*, if he put his mind to it.

It's not the best blowjob Michael's ever had. But it's the first to make him feel so fucking alive. The first to send frissons of something sharp up his spine and make him worry if there's something deeply wrong

with him for how he enjoys it.

When he starts feeling warning little throbs in his loins, the muscles there contracting with anticipation of release, Michael wrenches Dennis back and off of his cock. He stumbles back to sit on his heels, coughs wetly into his palm. Tilts his head back and stares up at him, eyes half lidded and deliciously docile. Michael catches him by the chin, holds him where he is.

“Do you want me to fuck you? Or do you want me to finish in your mouth?” Michael rubs his thumb over his fellatio plumped, spit soaked lower lip. Shivers hungrily as Dennis’ tongue comes out to lick the pad of it - a reflex, no conscious thought behind it. Seeing him so out of it brings…stability. Strength. Feeling in control, finally, of this downward spiral of a day.

Michael feels his shoulders relaxing. The frustration easing.

“I-” Dennis coughs again - his voice is *wrecked.* “Both?”

“Pick one.” Michael’s voice has lost the steely edge, all molten molasses now. There’s room for softness, to tease, to take his time. To ruin this fucking beautiful man at his feet and put him back together again. “I’ll make you come either way. Pick.”

“Jesus.” Dennis whispers. Then, “Fuck me.”

“That’s a good start. Give me a full sentence."

Dennis’ eyes slowly grow more conscious. Wheels spinning, trying to figure out what he is missing. Like working a difficult case and trying to find a proper course of treatment. It’s endearing and making Michael so fucking hot under the collar he has to actively resists the urge to stuff his cock back in his mouth again.

“I want you to fuck me.”

“That’s better. But not it. That’s not how *good boys* ask for something.” It hadn’t escaped his notice that first night, just how Dennis reacted to that kind of talk. And it works a charm this time, too.

“Fuck.” Dennis honest to God *whines*. “I want - I *need* you to fuck me, Michael, please? Please, would you- I need- I need you to, please-” and once he starts it seems he can hardly stop asking for it, hands pawing at his thighs, straining against his hold. Michael hushes him, satisfaction curling in his chest.

“Shh. Calm down. I heard you.” He reaches down, grabs him by the front of his t-shirt and hauls him up to his feet. The fabric stretches and he can feel the seams creak under his knuckles. Dennis stumbles straight into his chest, hands on his biceps trying to find his balance. He doesn’t give him much of a chance to - Michael promptly tugs his sweats back onto his hips and immediately starts backing him up through the house towards his bedroom.

They don’t make it all the way - Dennis’ eyes keep flickering down to his lips and he looks so good all desperate and keyed up that Michael can’t help himself. He pushes the smaller man up against a wall and claims his mouth with his own. Kisses him until his lips ache, curls his tongue in to taste - eucalyptus toothpaste, salt from his precum and something sweeter he can’t name.

“Have you been thinking about it? Me fucking you again?” Michael asks in the scant inch of shared air between them, voice barely above a rasp. His hands wander low to grab Dennis by the ass, yanks him close to grind their hips together.

“Uh-huh.” Dennis nods. His pupils are *massive*. Like he’s high. Strung out on nothing but *him* and oh boy he has to stop before he does something stupid.

“Say it.” Michael leans down, kisses open mouthed against the side of his neck. Lets his tongue brush a slow, steady line against his jumping pulse point.

“Been, ah…I’ve been thinking about…you fucking me, Michael.” Fuck. Hearing his given name keened out like that - Michael grunts and sinks his teeth briefly into the skin his tongue just tasted. Relishes how Dennis’ voice hitches up another octave. “Sh-Shit, I…it’s all I can think about.”

Even while saving lives?, Michael doesn’t ask. Even while I teach you how to put people back together?, he leaves unspoken too. That - That doesn’t belong here. Not now.

“Me too.” Is what he says instead. On impulse Michael bends down, grabs Dennis by the back of the thighs and heaves him up and off of his feet. It’s a risk; his back isn’t what it used to be and the kid isn’t a lightweight, but it works beautifully. Dennis’ gasp of delighted shock and arousal is like ambrosia to his ears and he finds himself smiling as he muffles it with another hungry kiss.

Dennis’ fingers sink into his hair, rakes through it at the back of his

head in desperate little motions - like he can't stop touching. They kiss like it's a replacement for oxygen as Michael carries them the final bit to his bedroom - door thankfully left open, because he isn't sure he could hold Dennis up with just one arm to fumble around for the doorknob.

Michael drops Dennis onto the bed and after yanking off his shoes (there had been no time at the door) he climbs in after him. Immediately, Dennis is reaching out - his hands are shaking. With need, not with fear, he can tell with a quick assessing glance upwards. Michael meets them half way - grabs a hold of his wrists and pins them firmly over his head. There's a quiet hiccup of a sound beneath him for it. Something dark and hungry purrs raggedly in his chest.

Michael sinks a knee in between Dennis' thighs. Lowers himself and angles his body forward so that his weight is on his hands and the top of his thigh smothers itself against Dennis' cock trapped in his jeans. The resulting keen is high and animal-like. The entirety of Dennis' body shakes for three uninterrupted seconds.

"Here's what's going to happen next." Michael keeps his voice low, making sure Dennis is hanging on his every word. "I'm going to fuck you with my fingers until you come. Then, I'm going to get my dick inside you and you are going to be on it until you come again - but not a second before I do. That sound good to you?"

"Oh, wow." Dennis's whispers, more to himself than out loud. His body flexes, hips pressing up against his proffered leg. Then, louder, breathless, "Good, great, perfect."

"Get undressed." Michael lets go of his wrists and leans off to the side. Rummages through his drawers, unhurried. Feels fucking gratified as Dennis scrambles to fulfill the command. Squirming and biting off frustrated breaths as he struggles to get his jeans down his hips with Michael's body still looming over him.

By the time he has the lube and condoms out, Dennis is naked and *there he is*. A mouth watering, insufferable thing bare on his sheets - wide eyed and trusting and needing him to show him a good time. Well defined chest rising and falling with quick breaths - ribs visible, but not delicate, soft around the waist. Cock flushed red, a decent handful and nestled in the crook of his hipbone, leaking at the tip.

Christ.

Michael is going to ruin him.

“Hands over your head.” Dennis complies at once, even crosses his wrists. “Good. Spread your legs.”

“Aren’t you going to get naked, too?” He asks faintly as he does as he’s told - spreading those pretty, lean thighs a tiny bit wider than last time. Getting used to it. Less shame each time. Michael wonders how shameless he could get.

“You’d like that, wouldn’t you? We’ll get there.” Michael snaps the cap open on the lube, squirting an indulgent amount over his fingers. “For now, all you have to worry about is relaxing for me.”

Dennis swallows thickly and nods. “Yessir.”

A squirm of discomfort and a lance of something hot and tacky. Fuck. No time to unpack *that*.

Michael places one hand over both of Dennis’ wrists. Holds him down as he leans over and kisses him hard on the mouth. Deep and with a demanding tongue dipping past his lips. At the same time, he slides his middle finger into his body - one smooth motion, no hesitation, all the way to the last knuckle. Immediately the silky insides clamp down - hot, tight, *fuck.* Dennis whimpers sharply into his mouth, strains against his grip. It’s easy to hold him down. One, two, three thrusts and he adds the second finger. It slides in beautifully.

“You’ve been fucking yourself.” It’s not a question, just a statement, spoken like a growl against trembling lips.

“Yeah.” Dennis croaks out. Moans as Michael stretches him open, scissors his fingers a little too wide before pushing them in deep to the knuckle.

“Felt good?”

“Not…not as good as *this*, fuck…” Dennis breathes out shakily, tosses his head back and to the side as Michael rotates his wrist in tight, slow circles.

The flattery is nice. Michael hums, drags his lips across his shaven smooth jaw and bites down lightly. Rewards him by changing the angle just so, holding his breath as he drags his fingertips in a firm circle against his prostate. Not everyone likes that - some find it too sharp and intense to deal with.

Dennis loves it, clearly. He moans, flinches and pushes down into it all

at once. Michael squeezes his wrists hard, then does it again. And again. Over and over. By the time he slips the third finger in, Dennis is shaking and covered in sweat. There's a puddle of sticky precum smeared against his belly. He looks about ready to burst. *Feels* ready to burst, judging by the way his insides are fluttering around his fingers.

"You close?" Michael asks quietly, already knowing the answer. His mouth has found a nice nook at the base of Dennis' neck to nibble at. Tastes the sweat and natural musk of him. Soars above the mountains.

"I-...I think so?" Dennis squirms, thighs clenching and releasing minutely. Michael *needs* to be inside him soon. But first he has to make good on his promise.

Michael picks up the pace. Fucks him harder with his fingers, forearm flexing with each push and pull. Makes sure to keep a steady pace, to grace that bundle of nerves inside on every fourth push, then third.

Dennis' wrists twist under his grip and he whimpers - Michael pushes him harder into the mattress. At this rate he might leave bruises. Feeling his insides start to spasm quicker, he picks up the pace a little. No longer graces, but *pushes* and drags his fingertips against his prostate, milking it on each inward stroke. Dennis gasps, kicks a foot against the mattress and then his breath bursts out of him with a choked, "I can't, fuck, I-I can't-"

"You can." Michael soothes. Doesn't let his rhythm falter.

"N-No, I - it's too - I *can't*, Michael, I'm sorry, it's not-" Dennis sobs and Michael has to sober himself and reassess.

It's never a certain thing, an untouched orgasm. Especially if you're inexperienced. Likely Dennis was able to last time because he wasn't thinking so hard about it. Now he's *trying*. Getting stuck in his head. Spiraling, just as he does during particularly hard cases, when he fails a procedure and struggles to get back into the flow of things.

It's not the mindset he wants him in. So Michael grunts and sits up, releasing Dennis' hands and pausing his ministrations to shift himself backwards on the bed. He lays on his stomach between Dennis' spread legs and slips his fingers back inside of him. And as he curls his fingers up into his prostate, he opens his mouth and takes his cock into his mouth - deep, as much as he can take all at once.

Dennis cries out, hips jerking up. Anticipating it, Michael lays his free

arm across his lower stomach and rests his weight there. Holds him down as he hollows out his cheeks and sucks, groaning with pleasure. There's an art to sucking cock and he would love to melt the kid's mind with what he could do - but for now, he keeps it simple. Firm pressure, no teasing or flourish.

"Oh, *God*-" Dennis grits out above him. Michael glances up to make sure he is being good - and oh, is he ever. His hands are clamped white knuckled into his own wrist, into the pillow. Entire body taut and shaking. He's holding his breath, face contorted with pleasure - riding out the dual sensations.

Firmly, Michael brings all three fingers in to the knuckle, curls them up towards himself and presses *hard.* Dennis keens, his stomach flexes under his arm and his cock pulses against his tongue and ah, there it is. He pulls off with a groan, replaces his mouth with his hand - it takes one flick of his wrist and then Dennis spills all over his stomach with a croaky *scream*.

Michael keeps his hand wrapped around the slowly softening cock, a warm sheath. Presses light, careful kisses over his thighs. Once the spasming eases, he drags his fingers out with a wet sound that he is sure would make Dennis blush if he wasn't so far up in cloud nine. He's a sight like this, Michael thinks as he climbs back up to his knees - pink all over, trembling, head tilted back and eyes shut, lips parted wide for heaving breaths. Arms still dutifully stretched out over his head. The picture of post-orgasmic bliss.

While the kid sorts himself out, Michael gets undressed. He takes himself in hand. Strokes his cock slowly - it's flagged some since the blowjob, just a sideffect of age - not a lack of interest, fuck no. It takes only a couple of tugs to have the blood pumping and his erection returning to full mast. He takes the strip of condoms beside him, rips one off and-

"You…You don't have to." Dennis' voice is faint. Michael snaps his gaze up from what he's doing at once.

"What's that?"

It's hard to tell with how red his cheeks already are, but he thinks Dennis blushes harder. "The condom? I…I've not…been with anyone else. So."

Michael rolls his eyes skyward and prays for patience. Because as

much as he'd like to, as much as his cock jerks in his grip for the mere idea…

"Dennis. Unless you've gotten tested together and seen the damn results, you don't offer that to anyone. And even then, I'd be fucking careful about it." He tries to keep his voice even, but it sounds cold even to his own ears. But he needs Dennis to get what a fucking bad idea that is before he offers it to the wrong fucking guy. The idea that some asshole might take advantage is beyond infuriating and Michael definitely should not examine why he feels so fucking strongly about it.

"Oh." Dennis looks incredibly embarrassed. There's a tension around his eyes that Michael doesn't like. So he goes to get them back on track, to ease Dennis back into the lewd mindset that got him to ask for it in the first place.

"I won't hold it against you. Asking for it. I get it." Michael smiles as he lowers himself on top of him. Props himself up on his elbows, hands resting lightly on Dennis' forearms, fingertips barely brushing his scalp. He leans down, brushes his nose against his temple, then puts his lips right at his ear, murmurs like it's a secret. "You just want to be dripping with me that badly. Don't you, baby?"

Instantly, Dennis' breath hitches. Michael feels him shudder against him, head to toe. Jackpot. "Oh, *fuck*." The breathless whine goes straight to his cock. "*Yes*."

"Thought so. You're a needy little thing." With a throaty chuckle, Michael lifts himself back up. Settles on his heels as he finishes unwrapping the condom, rolls it down over himself with well practised motions and reaches for the lube. "Just aching to be filled up."

"Please." Dennis whispers. The pinched look is gone, replaced by that delectable loose, eager expression. His eyes are down on his cock - Michael gives him a show, slicking himself up slow, root to tip. "Please, do it."

"So polite." Michael shifts his hips forward, presses the tip against the wet ring of muscle and glances up. Waits until Dennis catches on, taking a deep breath for him and then pushes in. Slow, steady, sinking half way in. All settled, he drapes himself over the lightly trembling man, tangles their fingers over his head and kisses him deep. Doesn't relent, tangles their tongues and pushes forward until he is buried to

the hilt.

Increasingly desperate little noises push up Dennis' throat until he breaks the kiss with a groan, tilting his head to the side, "Oh, *Christ*, I forgot how…how big you are." His voice is strained, the line of his neck tense.

It's not the first time he's been told. Michael does his best not to let it inflate his ego. He fails rather miserably. "Keep talking like that and this won't last long." He laughs, low and with heart. Rolls his hips once, twice - barely pulls out an inch before sinking back inside. It feels like a dream inside, wet and hot and vice tight. "And that would be a damn shame."

He fucks him like that for a long time - slow and steady, front to front. Long legs wrapped around his waist, clinging and dragging him in each time he withdraws. Michael buries his face in the delicate slope of Dennis' neck and just luxuriates in the feeling or rapidly yielding muscles massaging his cock. He stays there until it is slick with his breath and sweat. Every now and then he graces the skin with his teeth until he earns himself a shiver, a clench of thighs against his hips and a seeking pull around his cock. With each thrust Dennis' dick, sandwiched between them, rubs against his stomach and leaves sticky trails of precum behind.

Uncounted languid minutes later, Dennis starts to squirm impatiently. His breath begins to hitch. Already dancing on the edge. Fuck, to be young and ready so quickly again. "Michael-"

"Not yet." He mouths at his neck, squeezes down on Dennis' no doubt numb fingers and trails his hands down his arms. Wrist, forearm, bicep, armpit - lower along his sides, never ceasing the careful thrusts inside of him. He slips his hands underneath the small of his back, to his ass, lifts him up for a different angle.

"I'm so close." Dennis' voice is breaking at the seams. His breath stutters when Michael grinds his hips in against his buttocks. "Feels… feels too good, I can't…I need…need to…"

"Just a little longer." Michael lifts up on his knees, breathing heavily as he hooks Dennis' legs over his elbows. That familiar coil is tightening in his loins, but he wants to drag it out. "Told you. It takes me a while."

"*Michael."* Another breathy whine of his name - it's never sounded better. Dennis is a mess underneath him, flushed bright red from scalp

to chest, head tossing restlessly each time he moves, knuckles white and forearms flexed painfully from how hard he's holding on. "'m… trying, but…"

"Just a little longer." Michael repeats on an exhale. Bows his head and starts to go a little harder while taking a moment to appreciate the view. Watching as his cock withdraws from Dennis' hole, both glistening with lube - groaning as he sinks back inside, inch by inch, until it's all the way in. Shivers hotly when Dennis' breath leaves him in a moan when he fills him to the brim, and whines when he pulls out.

It's not until Dennis is in danger of tearing his pillow clean in two and has tears of simultaneous over-and understimulation running down his temples that he decides to relent and give in to the inevitable. Blinking sweat from his eyes, he hoists Dennis' legs a little higher, gives himself better leverage.

"Touch yourself for me. Show me how you like it."

Dennis wastes no time. His hands flinch down to his cock, but only the right wraps around it. The left goes to Michael's hip, short nails digging in like kitten claws. He strokes himself loosely, like it hurts to touch - sensitive on the second round, of course it would be. Short strokes, focused on the head. Michael pays attention, watches and learns. As if there will be a test in the future and he'll ace it.

As if there will be a next time.

Michael curses low under his breath, almost losing track of what he's doing. Quickly gets back with it as Dennis' breath starts coming in short and desperate. He puts his back into it - nearly folds Dennis in half as he leans forward and gives it to him *hard.* Mindlessly seeking his own release, not minding technique or anything but his own finale.

He's nearly got it when he realises Dennis is chanting something under his breath. Like he's praying. He leans closer, focuses and,

"...come, please come, please-" Is the mantra leaving the younger man's lips in barely audible bursts. Desperate pleas coming out of him on repeat. And oh, Michael realises - he's waiting for *him*, trying his best not to break a command he's already forgotten he'd given. Trying to be *good*.

The coil snaps. His orgasm hits him like a freight train to the chest

and he hammers his hips forward to chase it. Dennis moans with relief - his insides furnace hot and clamping down *hard* as he comes nearly immediately after.

Despite his best efforts, Michael can't help but crumple down over top of Dennis once his orgasm ebbs out to pleasant tingles up his spine. He barely catches himself on his elbows so he doesn't crash into him, thankfully, but he does let his body go heavy stretched out over him, chest to chest. Panting heavily into his neck, feeling him tremble beneath him. They are both completely covered in sweat, fucked out.

It takes several minutes until Michael gathers the strength to roll off of him - groaning as his hamstrings pull way too tight for a second. He rubs his face hard, wills the room to stop spinning. "Christ, you'll be the death of me, kid." He mutters into his palms, then gets himself up to sitting.

Dennis only replies with a wheezy sound. He's got both his arms crossed over his face, completely boneless and visibly shaking. His mouth is red and wide open for heaving breaths. Definitely not all there yet.

"Towel. Be right back." Michael pats his thigh lightly, then rolls out of bed with a great deal of difficulty. Winces as he wanders out to the bathroom to clean himself in the sink and fetch the aforementioned towel. On a whim, he also goes to the kitchen and grabs a bottle of chilled water. He downs half in three gulps, hand on his hip, fully nude on the fancy wood panel his realtor had told him were 'fully authentic'. Feeling a little less like he might pull a muscle or faint if he moves too fast, he goes back to the bedroom.

Dennis is exactly where he left him, spread eagle on crumpled sheets, breathing still laboured. Pretty as a picture. A very soiled, erotic picture, but all the same. He's about to pat himself on the back for a job well done when he realises those aren't post-coital pants leaving the sprawled out body:

Dennis is crying.

Panic grips Michael's throat. He forces himself not to let it take over. Approaches quickly and leans over him, hand hovering before he lands it on his trembling chest. "Dennis? Are you - did I hurt you?"

"No." Dennis croaks out wetly, a full body sob choking the word out of his mouth. "I - it's…it's not that. This was good, *so good*, I just…

this…stupid day and I…I am so *tired* and - I don't even know why I'm crying, *Jesus*."

Michael's shoulders relax. "Hey…shh. It's alright. It's the endorphins. A lot of shit coming out all at once. You're okay." He speaks quietly, tries to keep his voice to a rumble. More feeling than sound. "C'mere."

Carefully, he turns Dennis to his side to face him and lays down. Pulls him into his chest, cupping the back of his head gently. And then Dennis starts to cry in earnest - silently shaking, barely sobbing, like he's trying to not bother anyone with it. Idly, Michael wonders if he was allowed to cry much at home. Probably not. Farm kid, rural Nebraska, expected to be tough. It wouldn't surprise him.

Michael holds him through it. Strokes his hair, his back in long firm caresses. Every now and then, he presses a kiss to his scalp and murmurs a word or two to ground him. It's been a long time since he's done this, had someone trust him with their rawest parts. It's not the same with patients, they have no choice - even with Heather she only half-way let him see just how badly she was hurting. He can only hope he's doing it right.

Eventually, the trembling subsides and Dennis' breath evens out. After another while, he whispers, "Sorry." He sounds tired, but better. Calmer.

"Don't mention it."

A snuffling sound. "…I think I need to wash my face."

"I think we need to wash more than that. You up for a shower?" Michael starts shifting up on his elbow, but stops as Dennis presses closer, face nestled against his shoulder. His hands are curled up against his chest, thumb brushing against the dark hair there. He's a heavy, warm weight in his arms. Completely relaxed.

"In a minute." He murmurs. Sounds so utterly at peace.

Something starts to ache behind Michael's ribcage. Something like fondness. Something very, very dangerous. He really ought to rush this along before it gets worse.

Instead, he pulls Dennis closer. Tugs the covers partway over them and settles.

“Take as long as you need.”

-

They do shower, eventually. It’s a little more somber than the last time, but no less intimate. Michael finds he can’t let Dennis more than half a step away from him during it - hands on his waist, shoulders, back - full palm and fingers to touch as much skin as he can. Dennis is a little too loose limbed and clearly exhausted - docile as Michael moves him around and washes him. Ends up with his arms wrapped around Michael’s chest and half dozing off while he washes both of their hair.

Part of him wants to offer Dennis to stay. Letting him leave the house in this state, it feels like throwing a newborn kitten out in a box on Christmas Day. The larger part of him squashes the idea at once. This whole night was a bad idea - he can’t encourage it any further than he already has. That doesn’t mean it’s easy to find the words to send him away.

Thankfully, Dennis excuses himself all on his own. Something about promising Santos to be back before midnight, a stupid joke about being Cinderella that neither of them spare more than half a chuckle for.

“Thanks for letting me in.” Dennis says softly as he straightens from tying his shoes. He looks steadier now, if no less exhausted. His eyes have lost the haunted, desperate edge he arrived with. That has to count for something, inadvisable as this was.

“Completely self serving.” Michael leans his shoulder against the foyer wall. Watches as Dennis puts his jacket on, closes it. It really isn’t enough for the weather. He’ll catch his death in it. He swallows the worry so it doesn’t roll off his tongue, makes him sound like a worrywart. Or worse.

“Sorry about. You know.” Dennis shifts from foot to foot.

“Your moment of silent reflection?” Michael drawls. The closest they have come to speaking about his breakdown during Pittfest. “I think it makes us even.”

Dennis lifts his head, blinks in surprise. And then, he smiles. “Yeah.”

They stand in silence for a moment. It should be awkward. It’s not. It’s charged.

Finally, Dennis closes the distance. Leans up for a kiss. Michael ducks his head, grants it. Brushes his fingers down the line of his neck as he does, then back up. Presses lightly into the carotid - heavy, calm thuds against his fingertips.

They part with a soft sound. Linger in each other’s space a second too long, until Michael lifts a hand and gives him the gentlest nudge of a palm against his sternum. Dennis smiles again, briefly rubbing the pushed spot. Then, he slips out into the night and is gone.

The door closes behind him. If Michael spends a long, long time staring at it after he is gone, well - there’s no one around to know.

-

Robby winces as he stretches out his lower back the next morning.

“Long night, brother?” Abbot asks, shrugging his jacket on. His face is tired, but not haunted. A busy night, but no overwhelming tragedies.

“Eh. Think I twinged something sleeping.” Robby lies through his teeth, face scrounging up as he twists one way, then the other. He decides it’s a lost cause, sighs and puts his glasses on to start catching up on the day. “Don’t tell Shen, but I think I might be getting old.”

“God forbid.” Abbot snorts. Then, he squints, lips curling with amusement. “Sleeping or sleeping around?”

Why did he decide to choose an insightful best friend? Mustering all the nonchalance he can, Robby shrugs and says, “That sounds suspiciously like none of your damn business, man.”

“Around it is. You need a new hobby, Robby. Ever consider knitting?”

Robby has quite a few creative ideas of where Abbot can shove that suggestion. Before he can voice any of them though,

“Morning, Doctor Robby, Doctor Abbot.” Whitaker’s voice comes

haltingly over the bustle of the ED. He sounds a little hoarse. Surely that is just his imagination.

“Heyo.” Santos says around a yawn.

Keeping as straight of a face he can, Robby lifts his head to greet the pair like it is any other morning.

That goes straight out of his head the moment his eyes fall on Whitaker’s neck.

There’s a mark on his neck. A teeth- and tongue-induced bruise. Dark, obvious on the anterior scalene muscle, too high to cover with anything but a turtleneck. Not only that - it’s haloed by a rather impressive beard burn, inflamed and pale red. As if someone spent an ungodly amount of time rubbing their face into it.

“Good morning.” Robby manages, voice impressively steady. Tries valiantly to ignore the way Abbot is also very openly staring at the mess he’s made. “Get changed. You’re cutting it close, three minutes left until rounds.”

“And round and round it goes.” Santos salutes, then saunters off with Whitaker in silent pursuit. His hand has come up and is scratching at what must be an incredibly itchy spot in the light of day.

Abbot’s eyes are digging into the side of his face.

“Sorted, was it?”

“Shut up, Jack.”

End Notes

Hope you enjoyed! <3

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